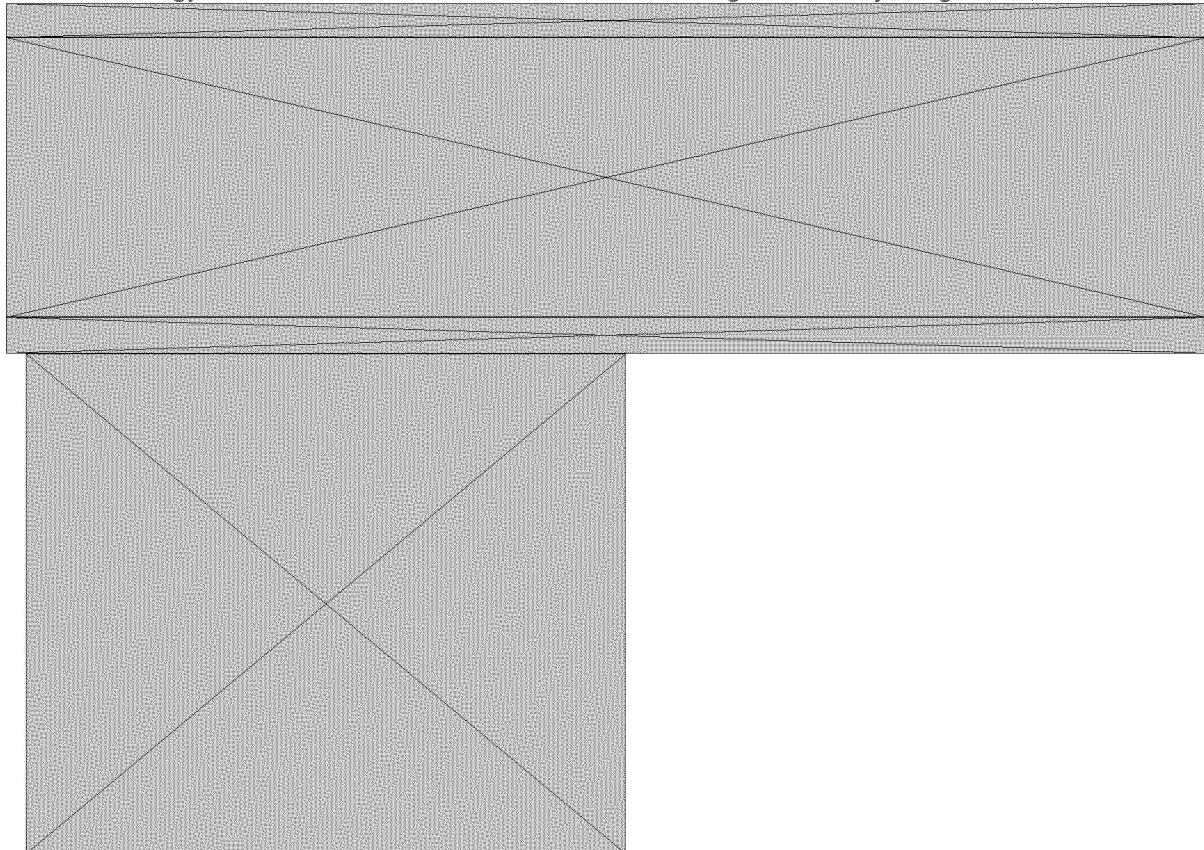


To: Hart, Daniel[Hart.Daniel@epa.gov]
From: EnergyGuardian
Sent: Tue 8/18/2015 5:32:09 PM
Subject: US proposes to cut methane from oil, gas by nearly half

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Energy and environment headlines for the morning of Tuesday, August 18, 2015



US proposes to cut methane from oil, gas by nearly half

By Matthew Daly and Josh Lederman

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Obama administration is proposing to cut methane emissions from U.S. oil and gas production by nearly half over the next decade in an unprecedented step to curb climate change.

The administration's target is to cut methane from oil and gas drilling by 40 to 45 percent by 2025, compared to 2012 levels. The move was not unexpected — officials set the same goal in

a preliminary blueprint in January. Still, by moving forward with the official proposal, President Barack Obama is adding to a list of energy regulations that have drawn applause from environmentalists and ire from energy advocates.

To meet the goal, the administration issued the first U.S. regulations cutting emissions from new natural gas wells, along with updated standards for drilling to reduce leakage from wells on public lands. It's unclear how much those regulations will cost the energy industry to comply.

"Today, through our cost-effective proposed standards, we are underscoring our commitment to reducing the pollution fueling climate change and protecting public health while supporting responsible energy development, transparency and accountability," EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy said in a prepared statement.

The administration is expected to finalize the rules next year shortly before Obama leaves office.

Methane, the key component of natural gas, tends to leak during oil and gas production. Although it makes up just a sliver of greenhouse gas emissions in the United States, it is far more powerful than the more prevalent gas carbon dioxide at trapping heat in the atmosphere. That makes methane a top target for environmentalists concerned about global warming.

With his presidency drawing to a close, Obama has been in a rush to propose and then finalize sweeping regulations targeting greenhouse gases blamed for global warming.

The methane rule follows a landmark regulation Obama finalized earlier this month to cut carbon dioxide emissions from coal-fired power plants by 32 percent. The plan, a key element of Obama's climate change strategy, drew immediate legal challenges from power companies and Republican-led states.

Obama also has proposed regulations targeting carbon pollution from airplanes and set new standards to improve fuel efficiency and reduce carbon dioxide pollution from trucks and vans.

In total, Obama has set a goal to cut overall U.S. emissions by 26 percent to 28 percent over the next decade, as he seeks to leave a legacy of using the full range of his executive power to fight climate change and encourage other countries to do the same.

Jack Gerard, president and CEO of the American Petroleum Institute, said the industry is already making strides on methane reductions and that the rules would be an unnecessary burden for both producers and consumers.

"The oil and gas industry is leading the charge in reducing methane," Gerard said in a statement. "The last thing we need is more duplicative and costly regulation that could increase the cost of energy for Americans. Even as oil and natural gas production has surged,

methane emissions from hydraulically fractured natural gas wells have fallen nearly 79 percent since 2005, and CO₂ emissions are down to 27-year lows. "This is due to industry leadership and significant investments in new technologies."

And Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Chairman James Inhofe, R-Okla., decried the rule as "another example of the administration's punitive expansion of their war on fossil fuels" and pledged his committee would conduct "rigorous oversight" of the proposal.

Earlier this year, the administration said it only intends at first to regulate emissions from new or modified natural gas wells, meaning thousands of existing wells won't have to comply.

Environmentalists say that the ambitious goals announced under the proposed rule would be difficult to meet without targeting existing wells.

David Doniger, climate policy director for the Natural Resources Defense Council, an environmental group, called the new rule "a good start." But Doniger said, "EPA needs to follow up by setting methane leakage standards for existing oil and gas operations nationwide."

Kevin Ringer contributed reporting to this story.

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Upcoming Events

Democrat Menendez announces opposition to Iran nuclear deal

By The Associated Press

SOUTH ORANGE, N.J. (AP) — A second Democratic senator says he's opposed to the Iran nuclear agreement.

New Jersey's Bob Menendez on Tuesday said in a speech in his home state that he opposes the deal which would curb Iran's nuclear program in exchange for relief from economic sanctions.

The senior member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee joins Sen. Chuck Schumer of New York in rejecting the deal.

Menendez says that he is opposed to the measure because Iran has violated various U.N. Security Council resolutions while advancing its nuclear program.

More

McConnell acknowledges difficulty in blocking Iran deal

By Bruce Schreiner

GEORGETOWN, Ky. (AP) — President Barack Obama has "a great likelihood of success" in his showdown with congressional Republicans on the Iran nuclear deal, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell grudgingly acknowledged on Monday.

The GOP-led Senate and House are expected to turn down the deal next month, with the Kentucky Republican calling it flawed and House Speaker John Boehner criticizing the accord. The deal with Tehran and world powers would curb Iran's nuclear program in exchange for relief from economic sanctions.

Obama has pledged to veto a congressional resolution of disapproval. The question then becomes whether opponents of the accord can muster the votes to override the president.

Offering a preview of the struggle, McConnell talked about the difficulty in achieving an override. Obama needs 34 Senate Democrats to sustain a veto, and 20 have announced they are backing the deal. In the House, 146 Democrats are necessary to sustain a veto and 48 have expressed their support for the accord, compared to 10 opponents.

More

Approval of Arctic drilling comes just before Obama's visit

By Kevin Freking

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Obama administration's approval of drilling for oil in the Arctic Ocean clashes with the message President Barack Obama will deliver when he visits

Alaska to emphasize the dangers of climate change, some environmental groups say.

As much as the groups praise Obama for his overall body of work — from stricter fuel-efficiency standards to regulations aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions from power plants — they consider the approval of exploratory drilling in the Arctic a stain on his environmental legacy that will send a mixed message to other countries about the seriousness of confronting global warming.

The burning of fossil fuels causes more greenhouse gases to build up in the atmosphere. Some groups would prefer leaving the oil in the ground and not tempting the harsh environmental conditions that could hinder the response to any potential spill.

"It sends a terrible signal to the rest of the world for the United States to be using public resources to promote that development," said Niel Lawrence of the Natural Resources Defense Council. "We have to make clear to the rest of the world that we are all in on a clean energy future. And we've got to stop giving the rest of the world license to go exploring by permitting Shell to do it."

More

EPA watchdog investigating toxic mine spill in Colorado

By Matthew Daly

WASHINGTON (AP) — The inspector general for the Environmental Protection Agency is investigating the cause of a massive spill from an abandoned Colorado gold mine that unleashed 3 million gallons of contaminated wastewater into rivers that supply water to at least three states.

The inspector general's office said the investigation also will focus on the EPA's response to the Aug. 5 spill from the defunct Gold King Mine near Silverton, Colo.

EPA and contract workers accidentally unleashed 3 million gallons of contaminated wastewater as they inspected the idled mine. The spill released heavy metals such as arsenic, cadmium, lead and mercury into a tributary of the Animas River, turning the river sickly yellow and raising concerns about long-term environmental damage.

The spill affected rivers that supply water for drinking, recreation and irrigation in Colorado, New Mexico and Utah as well as the Navajo Nation.

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Calif. lawmakers seek oversight hearings on green

jobs measure

By Julia Horowitz

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — California lawmakers from both parties are calling for more stringent oversight of a clean jobs initiative after an Associated Press report found that a fraction of the promised jobs have been created.

The report also found that the state has no comprehensive list to show much work has been done or energy saved, three years after voters approved a ballot measure to raise taxes on corporations and generate clean-energy jobs.

"It's clear to me that the Legislature should immediately hold oversight hearings to get to the bottom of why yet another promise to the voters has been broken," Senate Minority Leader Bob Huff, R-San Dimas, said in a news release Monday.

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A message from the American Petroleum Institute

America is now the world's #1 natural gas producer and will soon be #1 in oil. Now more than ever, abundant energy means abundant prosperity, opportunity and security for all Americans.

[Learn more at EnergyTomorrow.org](http://EnergyTomorrow.org)

Dog Days publishing schedule for EnergyGuardian

By EnergyGuardian

The Dog Days of summer are upon us, and as is tradition during the weeks leading up to Labor Day, EnergyGuardian will publish a single midday edition each day from Aug. 17 through Aug. 28.

Of course, we'll cover any breaking news with alerts.

Although Labor Day is not until Sept. 7, we expect to resume a normal publishing schedule on Monday, Aug. 31. There will be no newsletter on Labor Day, Sept. 7.

We hope you have a chance to get away and enjoy some relaxation as summer winds down and thank you for your support all year long.

Muslim scholars call for climate action

By Ayse Wieting and Karl Ritter

ISTANBUL (AP) — Muslim scholars and environmental advocates from about 20 countries on Tuesday called for a global phase-out of greenhouse gas emissions by mid-century, joining a chorus of religious leaders urging the world to take strong action against global warming.

Participants in a seminar in Istanbul said it was the first declaration of its kind from Islamic leaders, a voice many say has been missing from the debate on global warming.

The move comes two months after Pope Francis' encyclical on climate change and other environmental issues and ahead of a key U.N. climate conference in Paris in December, where world leaders are supposed to adopt a landmark agreement to fight climate change.

"I think this declaration will incentivize ambitious actions and spur the Muslim world, especially the oil producing countries," said Mohamed Adow, a Kenyan advocate for climate action who attended the seminar.

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All-clear given at nuclear site after delivery truck scare

By The Associated Press

AIKEN, S.C. (AP) — Law enforcement officials determined Monday that there was no explosive residue on a delivery truck that triggered an emergency response at a former bomb-making site that still handles nuclear materials.

The delivery truck had caught the attention of a bomb-sniffing dog at the Savannah River Site, and initial electronic tests also indicated the possibility of explosive residue, officials said in a news release. Law enforcement from South Carolina and Georgia was called in to help on-site security guards, and site barricades went up to keep out incoming traffic.

About two hours after the site issued its first security alert to the public, investigators announced that they found no explosive residue or devices on the truck.

The site near the Georgia state line that's owned by the Department of Energy returned to normal activity after the all-clear was given shortly before 6 p.m.

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Officials: Less chance of Colorado River water cuts in 2017

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By Ken Ritter

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Wet weather in May and June brought good news Monday from federal water managers keeping close tabs on the Colorado River water supply for about 40 million residents in seven Southwest U.S. states.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation projected normal water deliveries to residents, farms, tribes and businesses at least through 2016 and possibly through 2017, water agency officials in Arizona, Nevada and California said.

"We may have dodged a bullet for the next few years," said William Hasencamp, Colorado River resources chief for the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California.

Chuck Cullom, Colorado River programs manager for the Central Arizona Project in Phoenix, said the report gives municipal and state water authorities in Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming a little more time to address what everyone acknowledges is a the long-term gap between supply and demand.

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Records: California plans taking land for huge water tunnels

By Ellen Knickmeyer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — State contractors have readied plans to acquire as many as 300 farms in the California delta by eminent domain to make room for a pair of massive, still-unapproved water tunnels proposed by Gov. Jerry Brown, according to documents obtained by opponents of the tunnels.

Farmers whose parcels were listed and mapped in the 160-page property-acquisition plan expressed dismay at the advanced planning for the project, which would build 30-mile-long tunnels in the delta formed by the San Joaquin and Sacramento rivers.

"What really shocks is we're fighting this and we're hoping to win," said Richard Elliot, who grows cherries, pears and other crops on delta land farmed by his family since the 1860s. "To find out they're sitting in a room figuring out this eminent domain makes it sound like they're going to bully us ... and take what they want."

Officials involved in the project defended planning so far ahead regarding the tunnels.

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Union rallies outside Patriot Coal over pension benefits

By Jonathan Mattise

SCOTT DEPOT, W.Va. (AP) — Busloads of United Mine Workers of America miners and retirees roared in protest outside Patriot Coal headquarters Monday, as the bankrupt company looks to nix a union contract that includes pension contributions and health benefits.

From a makeshift stage on the bed of a tow truck, UMWA President Cecil Roberts bellowed out to a camouflage-clad crowd of 1,500 to 1,800 miners and led them in a march to nearby Patriot headquarters. UMWA packed twenty-two buses of miners from Kentucky, West Virginia, Pennsylvania and elsewhere, according to union spokesman Phil Smith.

"If you think that this crowd is big, you try to mine one lump of coal without us," Roberts shouted to union miners. "We won't just stand in front of your offices. We'll stand in front of your coal mines. We'll stand in front of your cleaning plants. We'll block the roads and nobody will have a job."

Roberts told the crowd he would go to jail for trespassing on Patriot property, like he and 15 others did at Patriot's Charleston office in a 2013 rally over similar benefits issues during the company's previous bankruptcy.

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Lobster population is shifting north; ocean warming blamed

By Patrick Whittle

PORLAND, Maine (AP) — The U.S. lobster population has crashed to the lowest levels on record in southern New England region while climbing to heights never before seen in the cold waters off Maine and other northern reaches — a geographic shift that scientists attribute in large part to the warming of the ocean.

The trend is driving lobstersmen in Connecticut and Rhode Island out of business, ending a centuries-old way of life.

Restaurant diners, supermarket shoppers and summer vacationers aren't seeing much difference in price or availability, since the overall supply of lobsters is pretty much steady.

But because of the importance of lobsters to New England's economy, history and identity, the northward shift stands as a particularly sad example of how climate change may be

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altering the natural range of many animals and plants.

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Kansas regulators urged to allow increased electricity rates

By John Hanna

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) — An agreement that would allow Kansas' largest electric company to increase its rates about 4 percent is reasonable for customers while covering the cost of power plant upgrades, attorneys for the utility and other parties told state regulators Monday.

The rate-setting Kansas Corporation Commission had a 90-minute hearing on the proposed deal struck by Westar Energy Inc. with the commission's staff, a state consumer advocacy agency and some of the utility's largest customers. The company's annual rates would rise by \$78 million — about half of what it wanted — and most households would see their bills increase between \$5 and \$7 a month.

Attorneys representing the parties to the agreement said it was comprehensive and complicated and urged the three-member commission not to change any of its terms. State law gives the KCC until Oct. 28 to issue an order revising Westar's rates, and several attorneys noted that the law encourages settlements, particularly agreements like Westar's where no party formally objects.

"This was frankly amazing, that all these parties were able to come to the table as they did," said Commissioner Jay Emler, a former state Senate majority leader and attorney. "It's very encouraging."

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Big wildfire threatens resort town in Washington

By Nicholas K. Geranios

SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — Big wildfires threatened the Lake Chelan resort region of central Washington on Monday after driving away tourists, destroying a warehouse filled with nearly 2 million pounds of apples and forcing thousands of residents to flee.

The several large fires burning near the town of Chelan have scorched more than 155 square miles and destroyed an estimated 75 homes and businesses Friday and Saturday, officials said. Scores of homes remain threatened, and mandatory evacuation orders remained in effect for more than 2,900 people in the Chelan area.

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The Chelan fires were just some of the many destructive blazes burning throughout the Northwest. In northern Idaho, more than 40 homes were lost near the town of Kamiah, and in Oregon a lightning-sparked blaze on the Malheur National Forest has grown to more than 60 square miles and has destroyed at least 26 homes.

So many fires are burning across the West that the National Interagency Fire Center announced Monday that 200 active-duty military troops were being called in to help. They will be sent to a fire on Aug. 23.

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Correction to AP Wildfire Funding story

DENVER (AP) — In a story Aug. 14 about wildfire-fighting costs, The Associated Press erroneously reported how soon the U.S. Forest Service expects to exhaust its firefighting budget. The agency is expected to deplete the budget within the next month, not the week of Aug. 16.

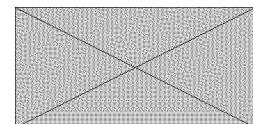
A corrected version of the story is below:

DENVER (AP) — The Obama administration says wildfires have been so bad this season that the Forest Service will exhaust its firefighting budget within the next month and will again have to tap into other programs for more money.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, whose department includes the Forest Service, said Friday Congress needs to change the way it funds firefighting.

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Week in Review – Ozone next on Obama's regulatory agenda

Renewable Fuel Standard science questioned.

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Study: Methane from gas supply chain tops EPA estimate

An Environmental Defense Fund-backed [study](#) concludes that methane leaks from natural gas-gathering plants emit 100 billion cubic feet of methane annually, nearly eight times the Environmental Protection Agency's estimates, The New York Times reports.

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Gazprom's influence waning amid lower gas prices

Falling energy prices, a European Union antitrust case and a potential surge of natural gas from Iran have reduced Russia's state-owned Gazprom's influence in Europe and given once-dependent countries new options, The Washington Post reports.

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Clinton comes out against Arctic drilling

On the heels of the Obama administration's approval of Shell's final Arctic drilling permit, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, a Democratic presidential contender, said she opposes drilling in the region, declaring "it's not worth the risk," National Journal reports.

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US crude up Tuesday, but near six-year lows

Reversing an early-Tuesday slide on falling Chinese stock prices, U.S. benchmark crude futures were 34 cents higher at \$42.21 a barrel at midday Tuesday, hovering near six-year lows. Brent crude was down 15 cents to \$48.59 a barrel.

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Algerian minister calls on non-OPEC nations to slash production

Algerian Energy Minister Salah Khebri said that OPEC won't be able to stabilize plunging oil prices on its own, and called on producers outside the cartel to join it in cutting production to reduce global oil supplies, Bloomberg reports.

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Walker to seek phase-out of RFS

Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker, a Republican presidential hopeful, told a crowd at the Iowa State Fair Monday that he supports phasing out the Renewable Fuel Standard, The Washington Times reports.

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Kentucky gubernatorial hopefuls plan private appearance before coal group

The Kentucky Coal Association plans to hear privately from gubernatorial hopefuls Matt Bevin, a Republican, and Jack Conway, a Democrat, at the group's yearly meeting in

October, freezing out media coverage, WFPL reports.

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IMF presses Saudi Arabia to cut reliance on oil revenue

The International Monetary Fund called on Saudi Arabia to cut spending, develop new taxes and diversify its revenue streams beyond oil exports, The Wall Street Journal reports.

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California efficiency program had little impact on wealthier households: paper

A paper published by the Energy Policy Institute at Chicago found that a 2005 California subsidy program aimed at reducing power consumption was successful at cutting usage in low-income areas but had little impact on behavior in wealthier coastal areas, E&E reports.

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Chevron moving to cut 950 jobs in Houston

Chevron is moving to cut 950 positions in Houston, part of a reduction of 1,500 jobs worldwide, as the company expects a prolonged slump in crude oil prices, FuelFix reports.

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Upcoming Events

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